THE

QUORN HUNT

By Cecil.

THE ACCUSTOMED PLACES OF MEETING,

With Distances from Railway Stations.

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THE BOOKSELLERS AND AT THE RAILWAY BOOKSTALLS.

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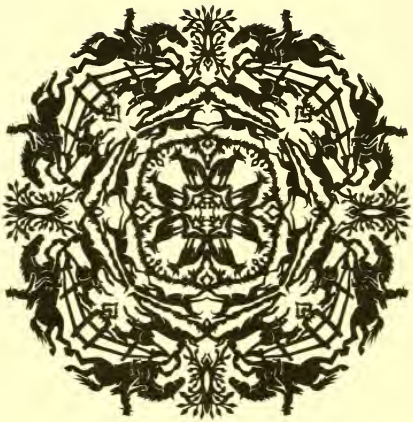

JOHN A. SEAVERNS

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VARIOUS events have from time to time contributed their powerful ascendencies to render the Quorn country one of the first in the estimation of sportsmen of the higher classes. The nature of the land, affording every facility for the enjoyment of the chase in its most delectable forms, was doubtless the primary attraction to noblemen and wealthy commoners to select Leicestershire for the pursuit of their favourite pastime. In the early days of foxhunting, before, in fact, it had become a "science," the ever celebrated Mr Meynell —in his courtesy, talent, and zeal, far surpassing all predecessors or contemporaries —drew the fashionables of the sporting hemisphere to the Elysian fields of this

glorious county. Fame so firmly established, and so influentially fostered, could scarcely fade away, more impressively promoted, as it has been, by many succeeding masters of the most aristocratic and refined accomplishments.

Many curious anecdotes have been related of that gentleman's management of hounds and country, for which there does not appear to be any foundation beyond the fertility of brain which gave them circulation; but as so much interest appertains to the customs of by-gone days in this favourite shire, I have taken considerable pains to ascertain facts, in which I have been most kindly and ably assisted by my late friend, Mr Cradock, in whose possession there were documents and details the authenticity of which cannot be gainsaid. A letter, dated Quorn, March 19th, 1800, from Mr Meynell to the late Duke of Rutland, is thus worded: "Lord Sefton will take my hounds at the end of the season, and I know he hopes to suceeed me in hunting the country;" and in an-

other part, the time of Mr Meynell's commencement is determined by the observation, "When the country was made over to me forty-seven years ago."

A most amusing and instructive little book, called "The Meynellian Science; or, Foxhunting upon System," graphically written by the late Mr John Hawkes, a very celebrated sportsman and companion of Mr Meynell's, affords a vast fund of information concerning the customs of those days, and I trust his two sons, my kind friends, Mr John and Mr George Hawkes, will forgive me for availing myself of several extracts.

"Mr Meynell considered one of the important objects in breeding hounds was to combine strength with beauty, and stoutness with high mettle. The first qualities he considered were fine noses and stout runners. In the month of November the pack was carefully divided into the old and young pack. The old pack consisted of three-years-old and upwards, and no two-years-old was admitted except a very

high opinion was entertained of his virtues and abilities. The young hounds were hunted twice a week, as much in woodlands as possible, and in the most unpopular coverts. When the hounds were cast, it was in two or three lots, by Mr Meynell, his huntsman, and whipper-in, and not driven together like a flock of sheep. Whippers-in should turn hounds quietly, and not call after them in a noisy, disagreeable manner. Whippers-in are too apt to think their own importance consists in shouting, hallooing, and unnecessary activity. Thoughtless sportsmen are apt to press too much on hounds, particularly down a road. Every one should consider that every check operates against the hounds, and that scent is of a fleeting nature—soon lost, never again to be recovered.

"Mr Meynell's hounds had more good runs than any pack of his day. Two very extraordinary ones happened. One was a run of one hour and twenty minutes, and, *without a check*, killed their fox. The other

was two hours and fifty minutes, *without a cast*, and killed. Mr Meynell's taste led him to admire large hounds, but his experience convinced him that small ones were generally the stoutest, soundest, and in every respect the most executive."

It is very clear that Mr Meynell was gifted with the highest conceptions on matters connected with the noble science, and more than that, he had companions who could appreciate them. Without in the slightest degree questioning the application and efficacy of most of the injunctions and practices, as applicable to the time when they were adopted, there are some few which could scarcely be carried out in these days. Dividing the pack into two or three bodies, to make casts where large fields of horsemen are spread in all directions, would be attended with many difficulties and dangers; and would be a stimulant to skirting and tailing. The custom of drawing the hounds, with reference to age, taking the seniors into the best parts of the country, was evidently for the sake of displaying the

greatest perfections to admiring attendants; though I should rather doubt if the driving properties of the older ones as a body would be so eminently displayed; while a little mistrust of steadiness among the younger members of the pack, peeps from behind the curtain.

A diary, that was kept during the last ten years of Mr Meynell's reign by Thomas Jones, the whipper-in, who wore a cork leg, likewise describes many observances and incidents which contributed to raise the fame of the master and his pack. From this source I have discovered that, besides the establishment at Quorn, they had kennels at Bowden Inn for their accommodation when hunting the Pytchley side of their country; and it should be observed, that when Mr Meynell first began he kept his hounds at that place, and resided at Langton Hall with Mr Boothby, who at that time contributed towards the expenses. Quorndon Hall was a subsequent purchase from Lord Ferrers. Kennels at Bradgate are also mentioned, but I should imagine

they were Lord Stamford's, and that his lordship offered the accommodation, as he had hounds himself at the same time. Where the hounds went to when they hunted Bosworth, Enderby, Whetstone, and Kirkby, in the Atherstone country, I have not been able to determine. They occasionally sojourned at Bradley for the purpose of meeting at Ravensdale, Keddleston Park, and Shirley, now within the precincts of the Hoar Cross country. The temporary occupation of these numerous kennels most probably gave rise to the frequently-expressed supposition, that the hounds were taken the night before hunting to the immediate vicinity of the coverts they were going to draw, even if the distance did not exceed a few miles, for which there is no authority to be found in the diary. That they could not have reached all their places of meeting from Quorn is quite certain, hence the necessity of the out kennels. Their most frequent places of meeting were Bunny, Widmerpool, Rempstone, and Wimeswold; also Stanford Park,

Queniborough, Costock, Walton Thorns, Swithland, Grooby, Bradgate, and Brooksby; and when they went from home to Bowden Inn, they sought their pastime in Stockerston Wood. Billesdon, then as now, was in high repute—not omitting Langton Caundle, Allexton, Easton Park, Gumley, and Sheepshorns, near Shankton Holt. Time has not changed the prestige of these coverts—unequivocal testimony of their superiority.

The average number of foxes killed annually during the last ten years of Mr Meynell's occupation was thirty-six brace, hunting three and occasionally four days in the week; sometimes on consecutive days.

The stud devoted to the service of the men consisted of about twenty-eight horses; though it would appear they were frequently mounted by gentlemen who wished to have the unruly spirits of their steeds subdued.

An opinion very generally prevails that the hounds of olden times were more noted

for their hunting powers than those of the present generation; that foxes were stouter and wilder, and that the runs they afforded were of longer duration. Jones's diary, giving accounts of all the sport during the time it comprises, does not confirm such conclusions. In the Quorn country, during the last ten years of Mr Meynell's mastership, they were frequently rolled over in five-and-twenty or thirty minutes, and their propensities for running short were often noticed; it is quite evident the whippers-in resorted to a little telegraphing when in difficulties. Two runs only, of long duration, are recorded. One on the 20th of December 1793, was from Barkby Holt, over that fine country to the Coplow, thence by Keysham, Scraptoft, Stoughton, to Ayleston gorse, where the hounds were stopped after a five hours' performance. The other bears date the 12th of December 1795, when they met at Costock Lees, and killed a fox, after running five hours and fifteen minutes, at Willoughby gorse. This was a ringing run, and on both occa-

sions frequent changes of foxes occurred. It has been asserted, too—an error into which I must admit having myself fallen by adopting current information which was incorrect—that it was the custom occasionally to take as many as one hundred couples of hounds into the field. The largest number of hounds specified by Jones, as having been taken out at one time, was fifty couples, which happened on the 6th of September 1798, when they went to Budden Wood, handy to the kennels; and from a manuscript list of Mr Meynell's hounds for the year 1794, the number he had in kennel was fifty-four couples. It was their custom to work large bodies of hounds, consisting of some five-and-thirty couples, till the beginning of October, or after a frost, but the usual complement was from twenty-two to twenty-four couples. Every effort was adopted to keep the foxes, as well as the pack, in condition, as whenever there was a continuance of snow on the ground, the hounds were taken to the coverts to disturb the foxes, which were evidently plentiful,

as in ten years there were only eight blank days. A fox found at Gotham, and killed at Redhill, was singularly distinguished by having a white ring round his neck and three white pads. The lustre which Mr Meynell shed so resplendently has not been allowed to fade by the masters of hounds who have succeeded him, though customs have necessarily changed with times.

Lord Sefton, Mr Meynell's successor, in the year 1800, kept two packs of hounds, and a huntsman for each pack, and introduced the custom now prevalent of having a second horse for his own riding. Lord Foley, following in the year 1805, with unbounded liberality, permitted nothing to flag. The celebrity which Mr Assheton Smith bore to such a venerable age was first acquired as Master of the Quorn Hounds, with which he commenced in 1807. A few years afterwards he made a valuable addition to his pack by the purchase of Mr Chaworth's, which were in high repute. He was the first gentleman in this aristocratic shire who set the example of hunting his

hounds in person, a bold attempt where every movement is regarded with the most astute criticism. After hunting the country ten seasons, the possession of Quorndon Hall, with all its appurtenances, was transferred by Mr Assheton Smith to Mr Osbaldeston, whose exploits of all kinds have been duly honoured throughout every portion of the civilised world where manly sports are recognised. It was not in the hunting field alone that he so brilliantly distinguished himself; in the various accomplishments of shooting, cricketing, steeplechasing, and race riding, severally he had scarcely a rival, in the whole unquestionably none, and his memorable ride against time at Newmarket will for ever afford an example of his great stamina and pluck.

Mr Osbaldeston's appreciations were peculiarly adapted to the tastes of those who hunted with him in this country; pace was a *sine quâ non*. To find a fox quickly, the moment he broke covert, to get the hounds away in a body close to his brush,

and, with anything approaching to a scent, to run into his fox in thirty or forty minutes, was the summit of Mr Osbaldeston's delight. When a cast became imperative, a bold one was his general custom. He either recovered his fox without loss of time in a masterly and most exciting manner, or he gave him up and went to draw for another. The echo of his cheering halloo still resounds in the ears of his admiring companions, too few of whom, sad to say! are now left to tell of his glorious deeds. About the middle of the season 1821, Mr Osbaldeston exchanged countries with Sir Bellingham Graham, who was then hunting the Hambledon, in Hampshire. The baronet had cultivated great experience as a master of hounds. Being impressed with an ardent love for all things appertaining to the "noble science," he appeared in Leicestershire a most accomplished artist. Although his weight was considerable—exceeding, as it is said, sixteen stone—he was always with his hounds, at the expense, however, of several nasty falls. His initiation

was with the Badsworth in 1815, from whence after two years' practice, he removed to the Atherstone, which country he hunted with consummate skill three seasons. A trip into the Pytchley was his next point, where, after one year of brilliant sport, he made a wide cast into Hampshire, and hunted the Hambledon till Christmas, when he became the purchaser of Quorndon Hall and its appurtenances, including a portion of the pack, from Mr Osbaldeston.

Appertaining to this period, Melton was in great force—quite in its glory. The magnates of the chase made it their winter's home, and it was a more exclusive quarter than at the present day. The reasons are palpable. Travelling was comparatively a tedious process. However speedily four-posters were required to perform the 105 miles to London, it occupied the whole day, at a cost of some five and twenty pounds, so that when a frost occurred, if the relief of the little village was the only alternative, the double journey entailed an outlay of fifty pounds on the road only. The rail

has realised a revolution, and though not without many good effects, it has rendered the society of Melton much less exclusive and aristocratic. The journey from the metropolis of England to the metropolis of fox-hunting, can now be accomplished in a very short space of time for the charge of only a few sovereigns. Since then, too, the attractions at Market Harborough have gained great ascendency, and Rugby still greater. We sometimes read of the Melton Hunt, but it is a misnomer; there is no such hunt in existence. The kennels are at Quorn, and from that place the title of the hunt originated. There were those whose daring deeds and prowess in the field can never be excelled, many of whom ranked as welter weights. Mr Maxse, a regular attendant many years, rode full sixteen stone. Sir Francis Burdett, whose residence was Kirby Hall, so renowned as the place of meeting on the opening day, was a most intrepid horseman. Then there was Sir James Musgrave, a member of the Old Club, who had a curious propen-

sity for wishing any newly-purchased horse when ridden by his groom to have a fall, in order that he might learn to be more careful for the future. Sir Harry Goodricke rode full fourteen stone, and his successor, Frank Holyoake, somewhat more. Mr Maher was another of the "heavies." Lighter in the scale was Captain Ross of rifle fame, and Captain White still lighter, highly accomplished on the turf, and undeniably good over a country. For desperate nerve no one ever excelled Captain Berkeley, R.N. (the late Lord Fitzhardinge), but he was a light weight, and a frequent performer on the race course.

Somewhat later came Lord Wilton, the most elegant horseman of any, with fine hands, and resolution unquestionable. His skill in race-riding afforded him vast facilities for riding over a country. His lordship has for many years resided, during the hunting season, at Egerton Lodge, a short distance from Melton; and a passenger travelling by train from Syston, cannot help being struck with the characteristic appear-

ance of the house, and its appropriate range of stables. It is gratifying to know that Lord Wilton is still enabled to maintain his place with hounds, though I believe he is the only one now going who commenced at the early date to which these remarks refer. Indeed, with the exception of Captain Ross, who has withdrawn from the hunting-field, his lordship is the only one of those men living whose names I have introduced. Sir Bellingham only retained the Quorn one clear season after the exchange referred to, when Mr Osbaldeston returned and hunted it till he removed into the Pytchley—an event which created sincere regret to his Melton friends. It was during this occupation of the Quorn country that he met with a sad accident; his horse falling at a fence, Sir James Musgrave rode over him, and broke his leg, from the effects of which he never perfectly recovered. In the mystic art of breeding hounds he had been eminently successful. He was a perfect judge of symmetry, hunting powers, and the neces-

sary qualifications of a foxhound, not forgetting the value of stoutness, and duly appreciating pedigrees. One of his first celebrities was Tarquin, bred by Lord Monson, whose pack he purchased in 1810, when he commenced his brilliant career as M. F. H., in Lincolnshire. Tarquin was entered by "The Squire," and taken to Quorn, where he died in 1818. The kennel yard was his burial place, and an epitaph was inscribed to his memory, which is now effaced, but the spot is identified by a drinking trough. The blood of his favourite hounds, Rocket and Furrier, though half a century has passed away since they were entered, is to be traced in all fashionable kennels. Indeed, there are very few hounds of great celebrity which do not run back to both of them, but more especially to Furrier, whose birthplace was Belvoir.

Lord Southampton, who succeeded "The Squire" in 1827, built new kennels at Leicester, and, instead of the ancient title of the Quorn Hunt being continued, it was

distinguished as Lord Southampton's. Soon after his lordship's accession, he purchased the Oakley Hounds, and they afforded first-rate sport. In 1831, Lord Southampton was succeeded by Sir Harry Goodricke, Bart., whose liberality, kindness of manners, and sporting talent, gained for him the highest esteem; but, unfortunately, he was destined to preside over the hunting arrangements of Leicestershire but a few brief years. He was cut off in the prime of life, after hunting the country two seasons, during which period a removal of the kennels to Thrussington took place as being more central. Sir Harry's decease, in the year 1833, placing all his unentailed property in the possession of his friend, Mr Francis Holyoake, together with the hounds and horses, the country became his, so to speak, by inheritance. At this period the Marquis of Hastings, of that day, wishing for more hunting on the Donnington side, induced Mr Holyoake to resign a portion of it, and a new district was formed, designated the Donnington

country. Foxes becoming more numerous, this, and similar arrangements which have taken place in other hunts, have been attended with manifest advantages, affording much more hunting and at easier distances. Mr Meynell, it may be observed, only hunted three and occasionally four days in the week. Moreover, he had a greater scope of country, including Mr Meynell Ingram's Derby district, and some portions both of the Cottesmore and Pytchley. At the time to which I refer, the Quorn hounds had five appointments in the week, and the Donnington three, with, if I recollect rightly, occasional by-days; thus there was established nearly three times as much hunting as in the days of Meynell. Two years was the limit of Mr Holyoake's occupation of the country. Having taken the name of Goodricke, and being elevated to the baronetage, he resigned to Mr Errington, in 1835, and that gentleman only kept the hounds three seasons, when they were sold at Tattersall's, Mr Hellier being the most extensive pur-

chaser, to hunt the North Warwickshire country.

Lord Suffield, with a profuse expenditure of the circulating medium, was expected to eclipse every predecessor in this aristocratic region; but unfortuitous events frustrated these hopes. His lordship obtained Mr Lambton's hounds in exchange for the large sum of 3000 guineas, and he built new kennels and stables at Billesdon, but only occupied them one brief season, when the hounds were disposed of to Mr Robertson, again to travel northwards. It was a bad scenting season, and with hounds unaccustomed to be pressed upon by hard riders, the sport was not equal to expectations, when Mr Hodgson, coming from Holderness in 1839, with a remarkably hard-working pack of hounds, by a succession of good runs, redeemed the somewhat faded fame of this celebrated country. Two short seasons, however, terminated the career of this gentleman as Master of the Quorn. He was every inch a sportsman. It was during Mr Hodgson's brief occupation that Mr Assheton

Smith, then hunting the Tedworth country in Hampshire, on his return with his hounds from a visit to his friend Sir Richard Sutton in the Burton country, met at Rollestone, where it is supposed the largest field on record assembled from far and near to bid him welcome where in bygone years he had been a leading star.

After quitting the glories of Leicestershire, Mr Hodgson retraced his steps to his former country, where he had so many staunch supporters; and in about two years, an appointment as Registrar for the West Riding of Yorkshire was an acceptable acquisition to his private resources. Soon afterwards he gave up his hounds entirely. In the spring of 1863, he was called away from the cares of worldly strife, deeply regretted by hosts of friends. His unassuming manner and hospitality secured to him those kind feelings of regard, which are ever an English gentleman's pride to boast of; and it must have been a sadly splenetic, vitiated taste, that could ever have breathed a sentiment of reproach against him.

On Mr Hodgson's retirement a committee took the affairs in hand, with Mr Greene, of Rollestone, at the head; and it is worthy of remark that Mr Greene, up to that period, was the only county gentleman who had ever been placed in a similar position. His great popularity and influence maintained for Leicestershire its long-accustomed celebrity. Approaching more recent dates, in 1847, Sir Richard Sutton, preferring this country to the Cottesmore, Mr Greene and the committee resigned in his favour. With a splendid pack of hounds, which he had been many years in bringing to perfection, making the old house his place of abode, the quondam glories of Quorn were thoroughly restored, and, in 1851, the Donnington country becoming vacant, was again united. No master of hounds of past or present days could exceed Sir Richard Sutton in that unceasing devotion to the "noble science," which is indispensable with the perfection of sport. All his instructions, too, were ably carried out by his huntsman, Tom

Day, who is now enjoying past reminiscence within hearing of his old friends in the kennels. A most liberal supply of the sinews of war was at all times available, to meet any expenditure that might be necessary to ensure the desired object—foxes were in great abundance; but in the midst of all these happy combinations, the season 1855 was inaugurated with a sad reverse, in the lamented death of Sir Richard Sutton, which took place about the middle of November. A melancholy gloom prevailed throughout the country, and the reverential respect expressed on all occasions bespeaks the great popularity the baronet acquired.

A few years before this sad event occurred, a district was apportioned off to Mr Richard Sutton, who resided at Skeffington, his father supplying him with hounds to hunt the country in that neighbourhood, and this he continued to do till the spring of 1856, extending his operations somewhat further in the direction of Melton and Quorn. Sir Richard's hounds were sold by Messrs Tattersall at the

kennels on the 13th of December 1855, when seventy couples produced 1821 guineas. It was a pack of very high pretensions, emanating originally from those the baronet bought from Mr Assheton Smith, when he succeeded that gentleman in the Burton country some thirty years previously. Very judicious drafting, and the introduction of his friend Mr Osbaldeston's best sorts when they were in their zenith, with assistance from the Dukes of Rutland and Beaufort, Lords Yarborough and Bentinck, also Mr Drake's and Mr Foljambe's kennels, carried them to the highest pinnacle of fame. Bajazet, a son of Mr Foljambe's Roister; Rambler and his sire Trueman, the two brothers Dexter and Dryden, together with Glider and very many more, have been extensively patronised by the best judges.

Mr Richard Sutton's hounds, thirty-nine and a half couples, were sold in April 1856 by Messrs Tattersall, at the Quorn kennels, when they produced 1490 guineas; the purchasers were the Duke of Cleveland, Lord

Stamford, Lord Henry Bentinck, and Sir Watkin Wynn. The country, being vacant, was entered upon by the Earl of Stamford and Warrington. It is almost needless to mention that the most unbounded, the most princely liberality, prevailed in every department. His lordship had previously gained experience as a master of hounds, having some years since relieved the members of the Albrighton Hunt from all the expenses of hunting their country; but that continued only one year.

His lordship commenced in Leicestershire by purchasing two packs of hounds, Mr Hellier's and Mr Millbanke's, to which considerable additions were made from Sir Richard Sutton's, and also Mr Anstruther Thomson's. Mr Hellier's may be said to have come originally from this country, most of his first purchases being divers lots of Mr Errington's hounds, which were sold at Tattersall's in 1838, when that gentleman resigned the Quorn country. During the long period Mr Hellier kept hounds, he devoted much attention to the breeding of

them, introducing a good deal of the Brocklesby blood, and also the Belvoir. With such excellent materials to commence with, Lord Stamford at once established a very superior pack, which were entrusted to the care of Boothroyd, who hunted his lordship's hounds previously in the Albrighton country. He, however, remained only one season, when the horn was transferred to Treadwell, who continued to hold the very responsible post of huntsman till his lordship parted with the hounds. The Belvoir kennels were much resorted to for fresh introductions, Singer, Trusty, Contract, and Rallywood, comprising the principal selections. Subsequently the Quorn kennels found nearly sufficient change in their own resources, so long as Lord Stamford continued to hunt the country.

The long stable at Quorn, if my recollection serves me, was formerly constructed to accommodate six-and-thirty horses, but a portion of it being converted into boxes, the number of inmates is reduced. As there are three boxes at the extreme ends, the

vast length of the building is to the eye diminished, but it still presents a most imposing effect of originality, the low stalls and the antique racks being still preserved. An inspection of these and the adjoining stables, containing altogether upwards of seventy hunters, was sufficient to dispel the dolorous expressions so constantly advanced, that England has lost the breed of valuable horses adapted to the purpose of the chase. That they are not abundant, or produced by every inconsiderate breeder, who, only evoking the chances of fate, obtains few favours, cannot be gainsaid; nevertheless, we still possess the good material if it be judiciously appropriated.

To enter into a descriptive detail of all the horses in such an extensive stud as Lord Stamford's was, enumerating every point of excellence that each of them possessed, would have been a labour of inordinate length, and would have trespassed on the imperative restrictions of stable hours. I content myself, therefore, with noticing

those which principally attracted my attention.

I should scarcely know which to select as the right horse to assign a preference, the one bearing the name of the Right Man or Bentinck, both magnificent animals, which were subsequently purchased for the Prince of Wales, the former for 310, and the latter for 500 guineas; but they did not answer His Royal Highness's expectations, and were soon disposed of again. Comet, a splendid bay gelding, having combinations of the Redshank and Melbourne families, did great credit to his ancestors. Phœnix —a very clever, short-legged, bay horse, Trumpeter, and Rocket were included among the horses distinguished by Lady Stamford's favour, and were accustomed to carry her ladyship triumphantly in the first rank. Charnwood, a dark bay horse; Kegworth, a great, fine, lengthy chestnut; and Bradgate, a grey ridden by Lord Stamford. Pilgrim, a dark brown horse, with very much of the Cotherstone stamp, attracted my admiration vastly—a long low horse,

with great power. All these, including Sultan, were ridden by his lordship. In concluding individual notice, so far as it is possible to form an opinion at first sight, and that only in the stable, I placed my warmest affections on Silverhair, a beautiful brown roan, daughter of Birdcatcher; she evinced most unmistakable resemblance to the family from which she was descended. Extreme cleanliness of outline, with great muscular development, are essentials of the highest order in horses required to live the pace with hounds over the pasture fields of Leicestershire, inheritances which her grandsire, Sir Hercules, transferred to his posterity on many occasions, together with the silver hairs which doubtless suggested the cognomen of this charming creature. She was in the light weight division, and at the sale was transferred to Lord St Maur in exchange for 125 guineas.

The horses appropriated to the use of the men were of very high character; there was not a second-class animal in the stables, and among so great a number I never saw

such uniformly good shoulders. The model of that very important part appears to have been cast in one form; at any rate, one very masterly eye selected them. The starry brilliancy of coat afforded incontestable evidence of great care, having been judiciously dispensed on good constitutions: but a very remarkable feature was the perfect coolness and freshness of every horse's legs. Whatever casualties had occurred, they were all skilfully removed. Whitehall, the stud groom, however, to a great extent enlightened me on this point, when he informed me that every horse had walking exercise throughout the summer; a most judicious practice, the advantages of which are clearly exemplified by the magnificent condition of the stud entrusted to his care.

The time-honoured custom of meeting at Kirby Gate on the first Monday in November continues to be observed, as it has been, with only one or two exceptions, for very many years. The russet tinge of autumn is at that period but just observable on the trees, the hedges yet green, and the

ditches are unmistakably blind. The majority of hunting men, according to the usages of modern times, do not put in appearances in person on this the opening day.

The protracted continuation of London enjoyments, and other contingencies, keep many away till a later period than was the custom in olden times; and although many of the elite of Melton are absentees at Kirby Gate on the opening day, there is always a large assemblage at the appointed hour, and the road is usually full of carriages, occupied by those of the fair sex who prefer looking on to participating in the excitement of riding to hounds. An imposing feature on these occasions is the large assemblage of first-class hunters, and in that respect there is no evidence of deterioration from the exhibitions of former days. Indulging in exuberant playfulness, the accompaniment of high condition, they appear to welcome the reunion with unmistakable joyfulness. That this country should rank so highly in the estimation of riding men is not at all

surprising, for it is one in which pace and fencing qualifications are unequivocally tested. The fences are generally negotiable, yet many of them require energy and resolution. The principal timber fences are in the gaps or weak parts of the hedges, and a stranger who rides for one of those places, which at a distance impresses him with the idea that it is a gate which he can open, will find his mistake. There are also double posts and rails, which require accomplished hunters. Most of the quickset fences are planted on the ground, therefore rotten banks are not often encountered. The ox fences consist of a ditch, quickset hedge, of divers altitude and penetrability, and a flight of posts and rails, which must be cleared at a stride, so that it requires a considerable amount of powder to negotiate them, while water jumpers are indispensable, as brooks are numerous. The Whissendine and the Smite are known to many by repute, who are not acquainted with their locality, and are often fathomed by those who seek their pastime in this aristocratic

shire. Charnwood Forest, on the north-western confines of the kennels, is a rare place for cub-hunting, though of late years much of it has been cleared. The Beaumanor estate, the property of William Perry Heyrick, Esq., who is a liberal patron of foxhunting, and of everything becoming an English country gentleman, is handy to the forest, and foxes are well taken care of on his extensive property.

Making a cast in an easterly direction, there is a fine open country around Six hills, including Ragdale, Thrussington, Brooksby, Ashfordby, Kirby Gate, and on for Melton, with Garrety Hill, Dalby, Loseby, and, farther a-field, the celebrated Billesdon Coplow, on the boundaries of the Billesdon country. Not far distant is Burrow Hill, which tries the wind and stamina of many a well-trained steed, when hounds run up it. To reach Burton Lazars, noted in history as the place where leprosy first made its appearance in England, requires the united powers and skill of man and horse. In the extreme north, near Bunny

and Widmerpool, is a country that may well be termed holding.

A quaint old place is Quorn, classical in connection with all things appertaining to the chase. The old hall, where so many choice spirits have held their court, if its ancient walls could but recount the scenes that have been enacted within their precincts, might divulge some entertaining secrets. The church, too, affords a subject of peculiar interest in an antique tomb of the Hartham family, dating as far back as the time of the Crusaders. But a most interesting relic, in the estimation of a sportsman, is one of the hoofs and a piece of the skin of Eclipse, in the possession of the late Mr Cradock, and is still in the hands of his family. The foot appears to have suffered from contraction, and the sole bears evidence of what is termed a pumice conformation ; the front of the hoof is remarkably thick, and has evidently been subjected to a very coarse rasp. There is another peculiarity worthy of notice—the shoe was attached with only six nails, show-

ing that the system now frequently adopted of dispensing with the full complement of eight nails is not a novelty. The piece of skin is of a most brilliant chestnut. Poor Dick Burton made Quorn his last place of residence, and I regret to add that it has become his place of everlasting rest. Tom Day, another veteran of the chase, resides here, within hearing of the pack; and through the kindness of the master of the hounds, in frequently giving him a mount, he is still enabled to enjoy his favourite sport.

There are very striking analogies between the destinies of empires and the incidents which preside over the fates of hunting countries, and their respective decrees are often influenced by causes very nearly akin. The reign of a good and popular sovereign is almost universally distinguished by the prosperity and affection of his subjects. The success of a hunting establishment is also subservient to the good taste, judgment, and ability of the nobleman or gentleman who undertakes

the reins of government. So far the fortunes of either spring from causes coincident. There is, however, this difference: kings very rarely abdicate; masters of hounds do so, sadly, too frequently. Since the occupation of the Quorn country by My Meynell, whose brilliant career continued for forty-seven years, and terminated with the commencement of the present century, to the year 1871, no less than eighteen masters of hounds have enjoyed opportunities of displaying their talents, dispensing their liberalities, and convincing the hunting world of the charms and delights that are so happily associated with Leicestershire. Nineteen changes, it must be observed, have taken place, Mr Osbaldeston having on two separate occasions presided as master, always delighting his friends and followers with his enthusiastic, never-tiring devotion to the good cause. Thus the average term of premiership has not amounted to four seasons; but Lord Stamford and Sir Richard Sutton nearly doubled that period, and

all honour is due to his lordship and the baronet for the very profuse liberality displayed by them on all occasions when the promotion of sport could be anticipated. It is very remarkable that a country possessing so many agreeable acceptations and delectable attractions, gifted as it is by nature for the enjoyment of foxhunting in its most fascinating form, should have been subservient to such numerous vicissitudes.

In the season of 1863, greatly to the disappointment of all who had partaken of the brilliant sport Lord Stamford had shown them, his lordship's career as master of these hounds terminated. The report had been circulated during the Houghton meeting at Newmarket the preceding year; but it was not till official notices had been given that the rumour was acknowledged, so reluctant were all to accept the intelligence. Soon after it became known that the report of Lord Stamford's resignation was not a vague rumour, Mr Clowes, so well known in the country

as a most brilliant performer, signified his willingness to become the future master. The sale of Lord Stamford's horses and its associations was an event that will long be held in remembrance at Quorn, bearing testimony, too, of the splendid establishment his lordship had provided to do honour to our great national pastime. The annals of the chase will hand to future generations the continuous fame of the Quorn establishments; while such animated biddings afforded the pleasing assurance of the estimation in which hunters of high caste are valued by British sportsmen; for, be it remembered, that all the horses were destined to distinguish themselves again and again over the pasture fields of their native land, as none of them were purchased to go abroad. Seventy-three horses produced the goodly sum of 13,872 guineas, a fraction over 190 guineas each.

Mr Clowes entered the M. F. H. list under most inspiring auspices, with universal hopes that his mastership would be as permanent and prosperous as that of any of

his predecessors. On the Tuesday previous to the sale of Lord Stamford's stud, Jack Goddard entered on his new engagement, and took charge of the hounds, they having been transferred to Mr Clowes for the valuable consideration of 2000 guineas, and he was fortunate in having secured them. The breaking up of an established pack of foxhounds is an event of far more serious import than casual observers are wont to contemplate. Hounds of superior pretensions, when taken from their old associates and introduced to fresh ones, are apt to become jealous, and not unfrequently display characters quite the reverse to those whereby they gained their fame. Difference of country will, in some instances, produce change of manners, and different management often exercises still more powerful influences. Many a slow, close hunting hound, whose melodious voice is invaluable in the dense woodlands of a provincial country, may be quite out of his element over the open fields of Leicestershire, where pace is indispensable. It is

not a very difficult matter for a master of hounds who has had practice, and is gifted with an eye for symmetrical proportions, to collect a lot of handsome rogues, if he will only be industrious, and search for the beauties that are condemned and drafted for vices and misdemeanours. In such cases, too, ancestral excellences are totally ignored. But how will such pretenders deport themselves? They may have runs, with two or three couples leading, doing all the work, with the remainder following in the rear, at wide intervals, doing nothing, unless perchance "babbling behind," than which the antecedent failing is far more venial. Such collections—packs of hounds I cannot call them—may kill foxes, but the manner in which they accomplish that *desideratum* will not bear description. I have witnessed such performances, but I decline the honour of recording them, so let them pass without further comment. Mr Clowes was fortunate in having no such difficulties to contend with. He obtained a clever pack of hounds, composed of good materials.

Besides those bred at the Quorn kennels by Lord Stamford for the next season's entry, he procured an unentered draft from Sir W. W. Wynn's, among which were two couples descended from the Duke of Beaufort's Harlequin, and several others by sires from the Duke of Rutland's and Lord Yarborough's kennels. Of their own breeding, six couples were the progeny of the Worcestershire Sportsman, whose excellent parentage can scarcely fail to perpetuate many valuable properties. Sportsman was a son of the Warwickshire Saffron, a hound I have on many previous occasions described in high terms of praise, and the Berkeley Charity, the granddam of the ever celebrated Cromwell, and was a daughter of Drunkard and Cora. Drunkard, a son of Hotspur and Danae. Cora, daughter of the Duke of Rutland's Chaser and Housemaid. Hotspur, son of the Duke of Beaufort's Regent and Harlot. Sportsman, it will thus be understood, was bred at Berkeley, and went to Worcestershire in his puppyhood. Honesty and

Triplet produced very promising litters to Sportsman; the former was a daughter of Mr Morrel's Hercules and Tidings, the latter of the Pytchley Trojan, and Mr Anstruther Thomson's Blossom.

In a country like Leicestershire, where the agriculturists are so deeply indebted to foxhunting, it is truly remarkable that greater facilities are not afforded to masters of hounds for walking puppies. With the exception of the late Mr Greene and Lord Stamford, none of the former masters had landed estates in the county; but what of that? Many of the noblemen and gentlemen who have hunted the Quorn country have annually disbursed little fortunes, of which the farmers have had the lion's share; besides the immense sums circulated by the wealthy frequenters of Melton and Leicester, together with vast numbers who rent mansions for the express purpose of hunting in this the most fashionable of all counties. Farmers may conjecture that it is a matter of little importance—that affluent masters of hounds can purchase what they require.

So they may, as regards numbers, but not perfections. They can never obtain a first-rate pack of hounds, except by breeding them, at any cost. The farmers of Leicestershire are fond of the sport; they are prosperous and hospitable, and they possess all the fine attributes that distinguish their class. That they should permit themselves to be immeasurably excelled by others in the provincial countries in their appreciation of that which so prominently conduces to the excellence of the pack, that not only affords them sport, but which also promotes their welfare, is an anomaly I cannot comprehend; and I am much inclined to the conclusion, that several masters of hounds have withdrawn from this cause, for nothing identifies a gentleman with the country he hunts more significantly than the cordial co-operation of the cultivators of the soil.

Many who were present at the sale of Lord Stamford's stud, will remember the kind hospitalities proffered by Mr Cradock, and they, with very many others, most sadly grieve that it was the last time of his

bidding them, on a public occasion, one of those friendly welcomes he so happily delighted in. His health had been on the decline for some time, and it was too evident that his exertions on the day of the sale considerably overpowered him. The nature of his complaint daily reducing his strength, he departed this life on the 7th of September 1863.

Mr Cradock and his family have been associated with the preservation of the foxes in the Quorn country very many years. A great proportion of the gorse coverts for which this hunt is famous, have been from time immemorial rented by the masters of hounds or others interested in the sport. The management of them, and the preservation of the foxes in the days of Mr Meynell, and for a long period subsequently, was sedulously presided over by Mr Cradock's father; after that by his brother, till about the time when Mr Greene followed Mr Hodgson, upon which the gentleman whose loss is so much deplored succeeded to those ostensible duties. It is thus manifest how

great are the obligations to the family. Gifted with the highest attainments and most conciliating habits, calculated to insure popularity and respect for his wishes, Mr Cradock's objects were successfully carried into effect. The gratitude of sportsmen was due to him for many a gallant fox and many a good run. Nor has this been forgotten. A handsome gold snuff-box, equivalent in weight to 100 guineas, presented to his father, has descended as an heirloom and a pleasing memento of olden times. A costly candelabrum was the graceful tribute of Sir Richard Sutton. More recently, in April 1863, the appreciation of the country was most significantly displayed by the presentation of plate to the value of 200 sovereigns, as an appropriate compliment to Mr Cradock. It comprises a large silver salver, two pairs of candlesticks, and a pair of stands or epergnes, with raised dishes for fruit or flowers, beautifully embossed and frosted. On the base of one of the stands is a beautiful group of a fox with her cubs, and on the other a

hound is exemplified running with a breast-high scent. The salver bears an inscription denoting the purpose :—"Presented (with other plate) to Thomas Cradock, Esq., by noblemen and gentlemen of the Quorn Hunt, in testimony of their appreciation of his zealous and gratuitous services as treasurer and secretary to the Hunt for a period of upwards of twenty-three years. April 10, 1863." Not only in connection with his long and indefatigable exertions in behalf of England's noblest pastime will Mr Cradock's loss be felt, but with reference to the general benefits which it was in his power—and more than that, his greatest pleasure—to dispense ; combined, too, with the social amenities of private life, his departure from among his family and friends is most sincerely felt.

How many now will miss that kind,
  That open-hearted smile,
So full of gladsome welcome,
  So void of hateful guile.
How many now will think upon
  The happy tales of old,
Now the kindly voice is silent,
  And the friendly heart is cold.

Years may roll on, and still thy name
Untarnished yet shall be,
Enshrined within a jewelled crown
Of pleasant memory.
Of thine unbounded good
How many a one will tell,
For thou could'st not have an enemy,
Kind friend ! alas ! farewell.

It was a source of surprise, and still greater regret, that Mr Clowes signified his intention to resign at the termination of his third season, when his pack was sold at the Quorn kennels. All the excellences to be derived by the most judicious breeding had been duly sustained. The good sources from which it had been originally constructed have been already touched upon; it may therefore be said to have been established five and twenty years. The sale realised 1250 guineas, the late Marquis of Hastings purchasing twenty-eight couples for 780 guineas, which was the first intimation of his intention to hunt the country; in fact, he had not even adopted the usual course of consulting the wishes of the owners of coverts. Charles Pike, who had

been one season first whip to Lord Dacre, was installed as huntsman, and shortly afterwards kennels were constructed at Donnington, which, being an immense distance from the best coverts, entailed an amount of travelling by road and rail, and consequent wear and tear of men, horses, and hounds, almost incredible. Notwithstanding this, however, the following June three couples of hounds took a first prize at Birmingham, half of which had been purchased from Mr Clowes, one couple from Lord Yarborough, and the single hound from Mr Drake. Charles Pike's services were dispensed with after the first winter, and his place supplied by Thomas Wilson from Essex, who was afterwards engaged as huntsman to the South Staffordshire, when that country was established.

The career of the Marquis of Hastings, as a master of hounds, continued only two seasons. To say that he distinguished himself by the promotion of sport, would be an exaggeration, for he appeared to care very

little about it. It would be difficult, yet very entertaining if it were possible, to analyse and define the various impulses which induce some men to become masters of hounds. Fondness for sport certainly does not actuate them all; neither can the interest attached to the pack exercise any appreciable influence, when they scarcely know their names; and as to tracing their pedigrees, in order to secure the best blood for breeding purposes, that is a task far too erudite for their conceptions. It is, indeed, to be regretted, when gentlemen of such constitutions incur those troubles and anxieties incident to such onerous duties.

The Quorn kennels of late years have been doomed to be the site of sales. The Marquis of Hastings' hounds and horses were there disposed of in May 1868, and the pack produced something over 1000 guineas—quite as much, more indeed, than under all circumstances could have been contemplated. Lord Rendlesham, who was then establishing a pack in Suffolk, was the principal purchaser; Mr Francklin, about

to take the country in Nottinghamshire—temporarily vacated by Mr Chaworth Musters—and Mr Drake, were bidders; and the Marquis of Queensberry had eight couples to do duty in Scotland.

The horses were well sold; for, good as many of them had been, they displayed unequivocal testimony of the severe work they had been compelled to endure. The highest-priced one was Methodist, a famous nag that formerly belonged to Mr Clowes. His price was 250 guineas, for which sum he was consigned to Baron Rothschild.

An opening on this occasion presented itself to Mr Chaworth Musters, who, as already intimated, had established a pack of hounds, in 1862, to hunt a portion of Nottinghamshire, in the neighbourhood of his ancestral residence, Annesley Hall—a country which may indeed be deemed a family heritage. He commenced with a goodly portion from Mr Parry's kennels, augmented from the Duke of Rutland's, Lord Kestevens', and Mr Drake's, and subsequently he obtained much good blood from

Lord Yarborough's, to which were added two lots purchased at the Marquis's sale.

Mr Musters, although ranking as a welter weight, generally hunted them himself, with Frank Gillard as first whip and kennel huntsman, but who has since been engaged by the Duke of Rutland. It is pleasingly significant of the respect in which Mr Musters was held by a class of men not too often grateful for the douceurs given them for performing their duties, that the keepers and earthstoppers clubbed together and presented Mr Musters with a hunting whip, in recognition of the liberality he had displayed towards them.

In the spring of 1870, an arrangement was entered into between Mr Musters and Mr Coupland, who had for some seasons made Melton his winter residence, to hunt the country conjointly; the former gentleman supplying the hounds, whilst the latter appeared before the public as the ostensible master. The good custom of giving prizes, for the care bestowed on the future hopes of the kennels, was during that summer

very gracefully carried out, and it is to be hoped the precedent will prompt the sport-loving agriculturalists, who flourish in Leicestershire, to respond to the liberality by volunteering to walk puppies. The show took place in August, and a special invitation to be present was irresistible. There was a famous entry of seventeen couples and a half, all of which were bred by Mr Musters, many of them by his own sires, others by the Duke of Rutland's Senator, Contest, Stormer, Dryden, and Tarquin, also the Hon. George Fitzwilliam's Bluster and Major. The judges on the occasion were the veteran John Walker, Frank Goodall, and Tom Firr. Their verdicts were given in favour of Furrier, son of Lucifer and Frolic, walked by Mr Peats of Edwalton, and Transit, daughter of the Duke of Rutland's Tarquin and Termagant. She had been duly fostered by Mr Farthing, a worthy tanner living at Quorn, who takes vast interest in the puppies entrusted to his care. It was contemplated that Mr Musters would hunt a

pack in person two days a week, principally in the forest; but this was scarcely carried into effect, that gentleman's health—greatly to the regret of his friends—not being at all times quite equal to it. James Macbride was engaged by Mr Coupland to hunt the other portion of the country four days in the week. Macbride's experience has been extensive, the more effective, having been initiated in the mysteries of the noble science by most accomplished sportsmen.

He took his first lessons from Mr Thomson with the Fife hounds, after which he had two years at Brocklesby under William Smith; again travelling into Scotland he served five years for the Duke of Buccleuch. In 1860 he came to Quorn during Lord Stamford's occupation, acting as first whip to John Treadwell, and when Mr Clowes succeeded his lordship, having engaged John Goddard as huntsman, Macbride retained his place till the accession of the Marquis of Hastings, when he obtained promotion by the Hon. R. C. Hill, to carry the horn in the sporting county of

Shropshire, after which he had one season with Lord Fitzhardinge, from whence he returned to his old quarters at Quorn.

Much regret was expressed when it was announced in Leicestershire that Mr Musters would remove his hounds to his home country in Nottinghamshire, for he had formed a pack of inestimable worth; and more than that, he was extremely popular with all classes. There was then but one alternative, for Mr Coupland to procure another pack, which he did by purchasing the Craven.

The principal places at which these hounds meet are within the following distances from Railway Stations. As hunting appointments are subservient to changes, it may be well to observe that fresh ones are occasionally introduced and old ones discontinued.

PLACES OF MEETING.	MILES FROM STATION.
Ab-Kettleby,	3½ Melton.
Ashfordby,	3 Brooksby.
	3½ Melton.
Bardon Hall,	½ Bardon Hill.

PLACES OF MEETING.	MILES FROM STATION.
Barkby Holt, or Hall,	1½ Syston.
Baggrave Hall,	5½ Syston.
	8 Melton.
	8½ Leicester.
Beeby,	3½ Syston.
Bradgate Park,	6 Barrow.
	6 Bagworth.
	6 Leicester.
	6½ Bardon Hill.
Belton,	6½ Loughborough.
	7 Ashby.
Barrow Bridge,	½ Barrow.
Beau Manor,	4 Barrow.
	6 Syston.
Bunny Park,	6½ Kegworth.
	6 Nottingham.
	8 Loughborough.
Bradmore,	6 Nottingham.
	9 Loughborough.
Burton on the Wolds,	2½ Barrow.
	4½ Loughborough.
Burleigh,	2½ Loughborough.
Brooksby Gate,	1 Brooksby.
Cortlingstock,	5 Kegworth.
	5½ Loughborough.
	10 Nottingham.
Cossington,	2½ Syston.
	3½ Barrow.
	6 Leicester.
Charley Mill,	3 Bardon Hill.
Copt Oak,	2½ Bardon Hill.
Cotes Toll-Bar,	½ Loughborough.
Coleorton Hall,	2 Ashby.

PLACES OF MEETING.	MILES FROM STATION.
Gaddesby,	2½ Brooksby.
	4½ Syston.
	6½ Melton.
Glenfield,	2½ Leicester.
	4 Desford.
Grooby,	4 Leicester.
	4 Desford.
Grimston Village,	4½ Brooksby.
	5 Melton.
Great Dalby,	3 Melton.
	6 Brooksby.
Holwell,	4 Melton.
Ingarsby,	6 Leicester.
	6 Syston.
John o' Gaunt,	7 Syston.
Keyham,	4½ Syston.
Kirby Gate,	2 Melton.
	5 Brooksby.
Lodge on the Wolds,	9 Nottingham.
	10 Melton.
Loseby,	7 Syston.
Melbourne Hall,	5 Ashby.
Newtown Lindford,	6 Leicester.
	6 Bardon Hill.
Over Broughton,	6½ Melton.
	12 Nottingham.
Prestwold,	2 Barrow.
	2½ Loughborough.
Quenby,	6½ Syston.
	7 Leicester.
	10 Melton.
Queniborough,	2 Syston.
	3 Brooksby.
	9½ Melton.

PLACES OF MEETING.	MILES FROM STATION.
Quorn House,	1½ Barrow.
Ragdale,	2½ Brooksby.
Ratcliff,	3 Syston.
	3 Brooksby.
Roecliff House,	6 Bardon Hill.
	6½ Syston.
Rothley Plain,	3½ Syston.
	3½ Barrow.
	6 Leicester.
Segrave,	3 Brooksby.
	4½ Syston.
Swithland Village,	4½ Barrow.
	5½ Syston.
	7 Leicester.
Stewards' Hay,	5½ Bardon Hill.
	5½ Bagworth.
	6 Leicester.
Scraptoft,	4 Leicester.
	4½ Syston.
Six Hills,	3 Brooksby.
	7½ Loughborough.
	8½ Melton.
Staunton Harold,	4 Ashby.
Thrope Satchville,	5 Melton.
	5½ Brooksby.
Thornton Reservoir,	1 Bagworth.
Thurnby,	4 Leicester.
	5 Syston.
The Privetts Garendon,	3½ Loughborough.
Thrussington,	1 Brooksby.
	7½ Melton.
Ulverscroft Abbey,	1½ Bardon Hill.
Walton Cross Roads,	2½ Loughborough.

PLACES OF MEETING.	MILES FROM STATION.	
Widmerpool, . . .	9	Kegworth.
	9½	Melton.
	9½	Loughborough.
Wanlip Hill, ...	2	Syston.
	4	Leicester.
Wartnaby Stone Pits, . .	4	Melton.
Wimeswold, ...	4½	Loughborough.

THE END.

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